
Producing Quality Configuration Guides – A NSA Perspective
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Road Map
Guides history at NSA
Guide development - business process overview
Content development – security checklist issues
Forecast [wish list] for the future
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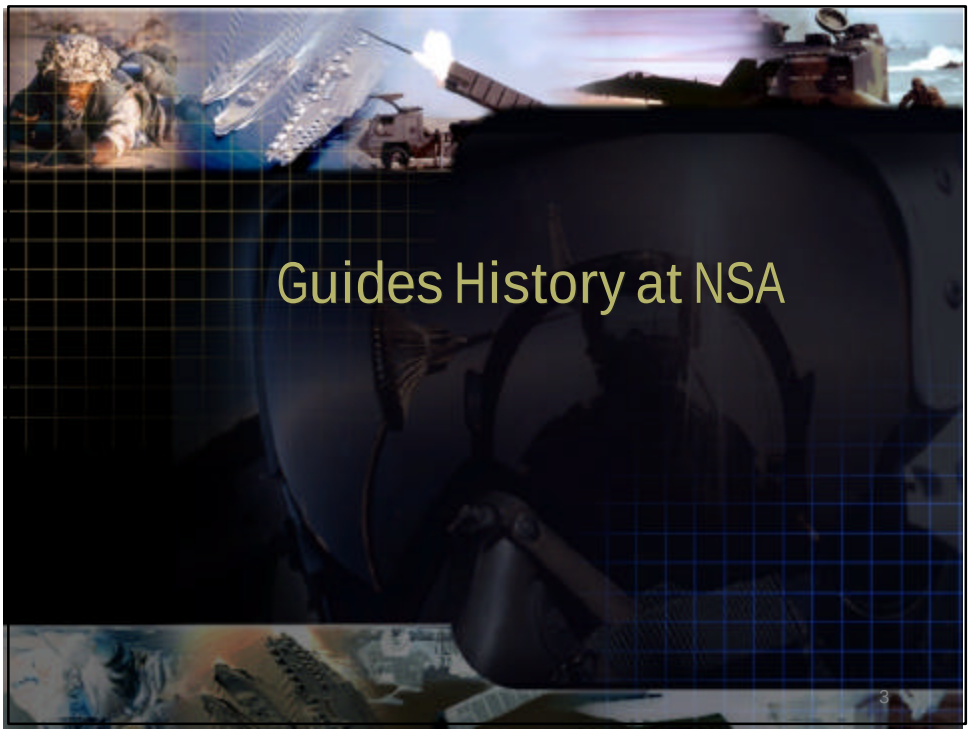
Guides History at NSA
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History
Circa 1996: Problem – How do we service all the customer requests?
Solution: Configuration Guides
Customers:
Initially - A few select customers
Later
Win NT OS and Applications CD
Audience: ~10,000 Government users and their contractors
Currently
Web presence
Audience: The entire world
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Current Status
38 Guides Published on www.nsa.gov
Consulted on many others
Partners:
CIS
Vendors
Other Govt. agencies
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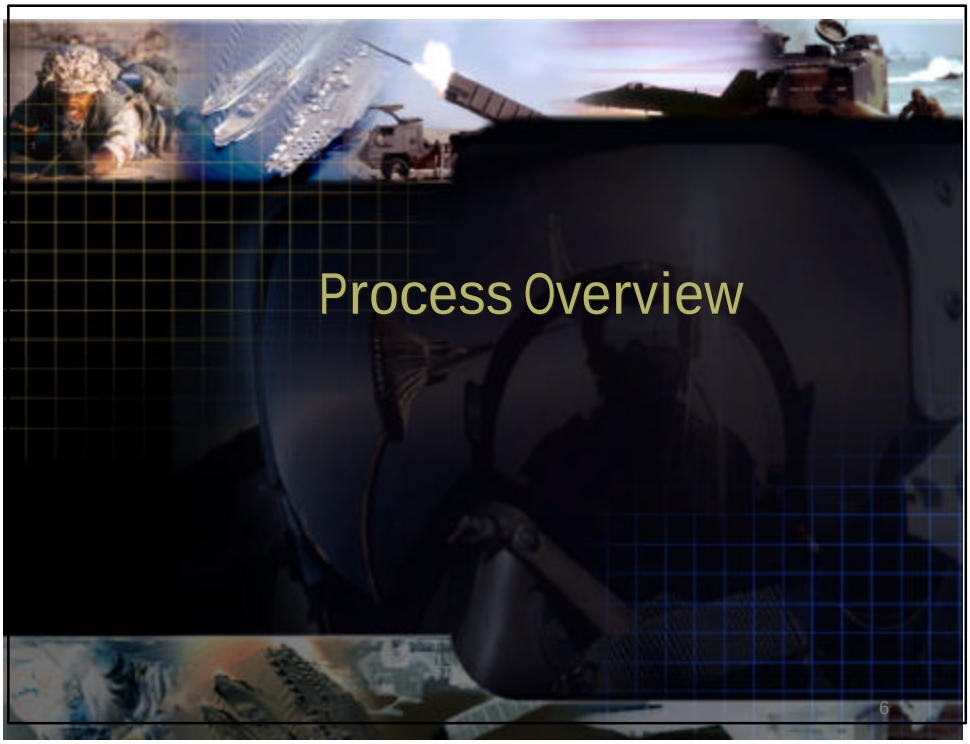
Process Overview
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Our Goals

- Deliver the best product possible
- Reduce the number of calories an admin must expend

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Community Involvement

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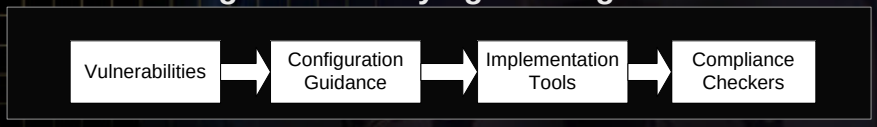
The “Big Picture”

- **The “Big Picture” – tying it all together**



- **Nirvana: Automatic translation**

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Content Development

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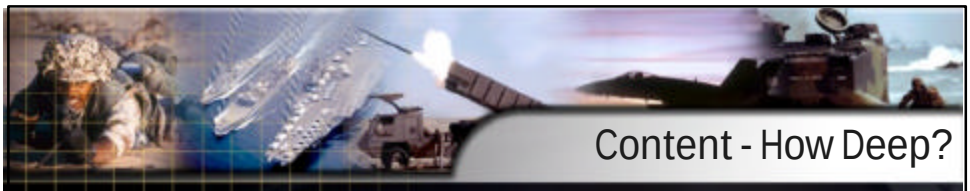

Content - How Deep?

- **Level 1: ID the security relevant features**
  - ***Little value to the reader – not acceptable***
- **Level 2: ID the security features along with recommendations**
  - ***Better, but still lacking***
- **Level 3: Identification of the security features along with recommendations, interdependences, lessons learned**

Target audience – administrator who basically understands the app but needs to understand the security aspects

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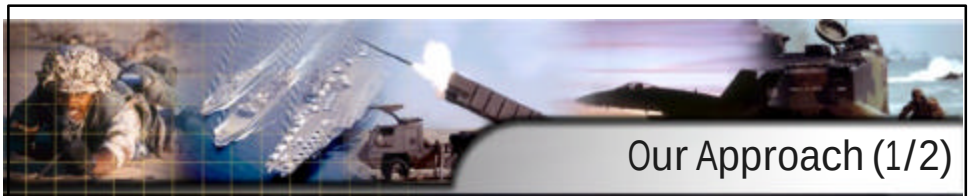

Our Approach (1/2)

- **Study**
  - ***Known threats, vulnerabilities***
  - ***Take max. advantage of what has already been written***
- **Explore**
  - ***Exercise the security model***
  - ***Take copious notes***
- **Understand -- and keep taking notes**
- **Write**
  - ***10% of the task if the writer truly understands***
  - ***Don't forget the target audience***

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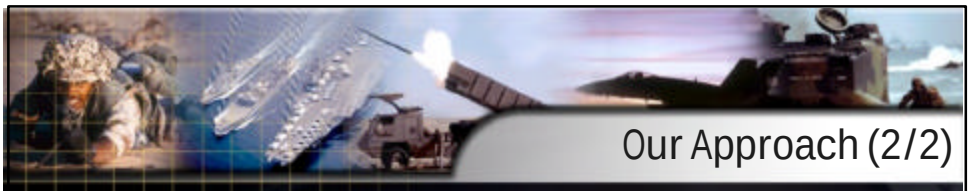

Our Approach (2/2)

- **Test and verify**
  - ***Do the various guides play together***
  - ***Does the document focus on security***
  - ***Is the document consistent***
  - ***Are we as prescriptive as practical***
  - ***Do we cover the security relevant issues***
  - ***Did we hit the target audience***

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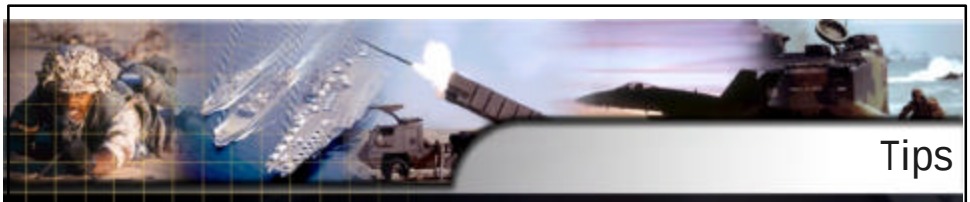

Tips

- **Use some means of rapid recovery during development**
- **Always remember the target audience**
- **Remember you are writing a *security* guide**
- **Be meticulous in final test**

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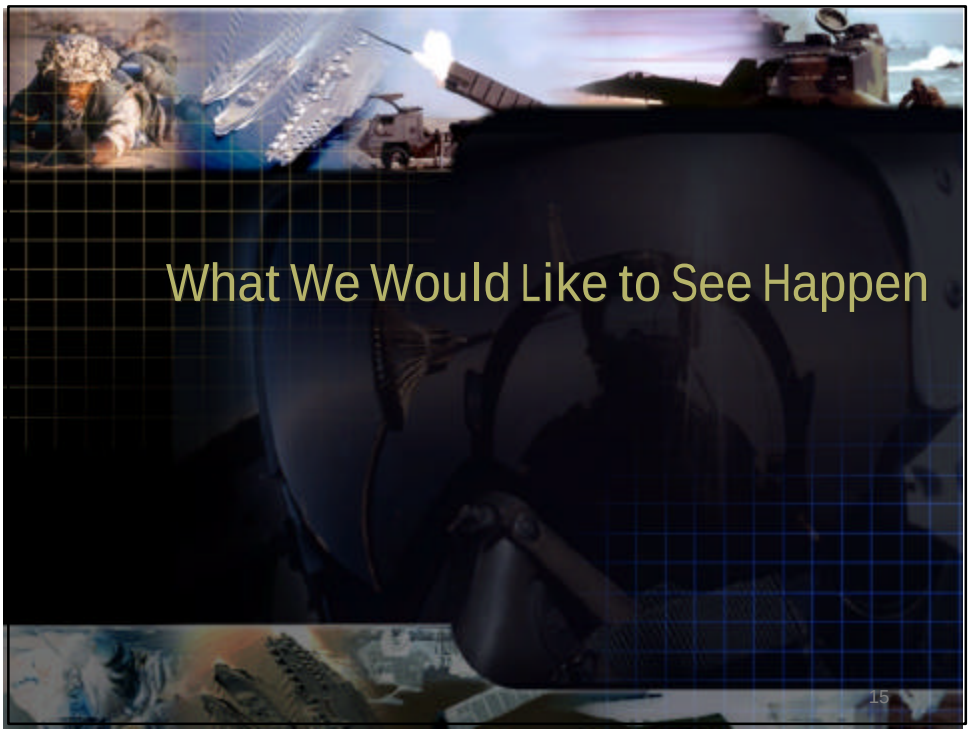
What We Would Like to See Happen
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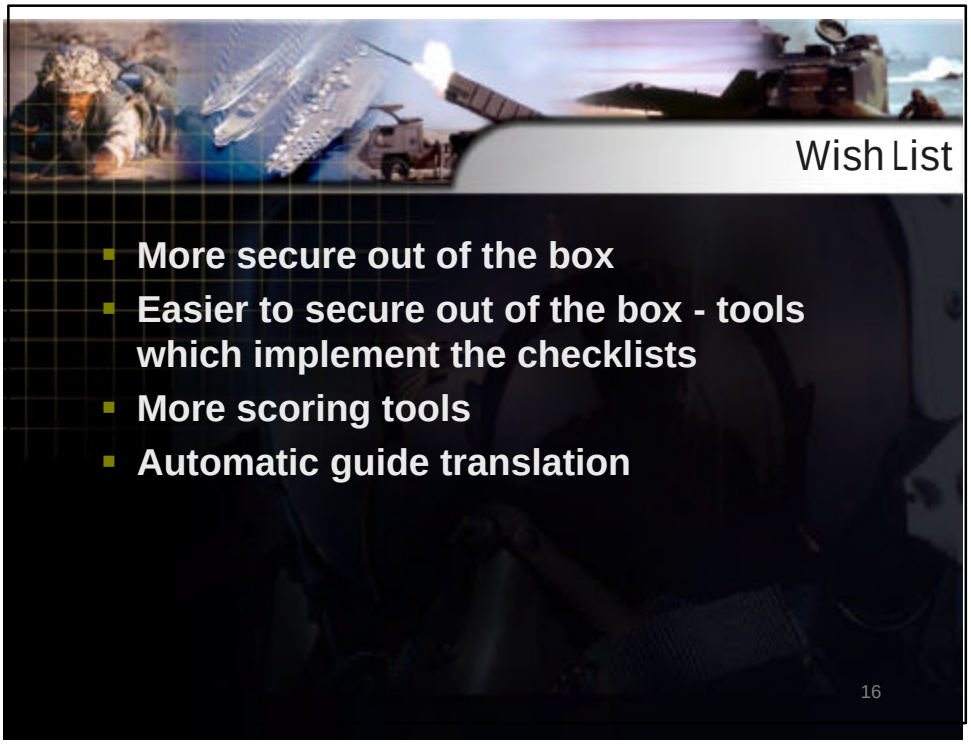
Wish List
More secure out of the box
Easier to secure out of the box - tools which implement the checklists
More scoring tools
Automatic guide translation
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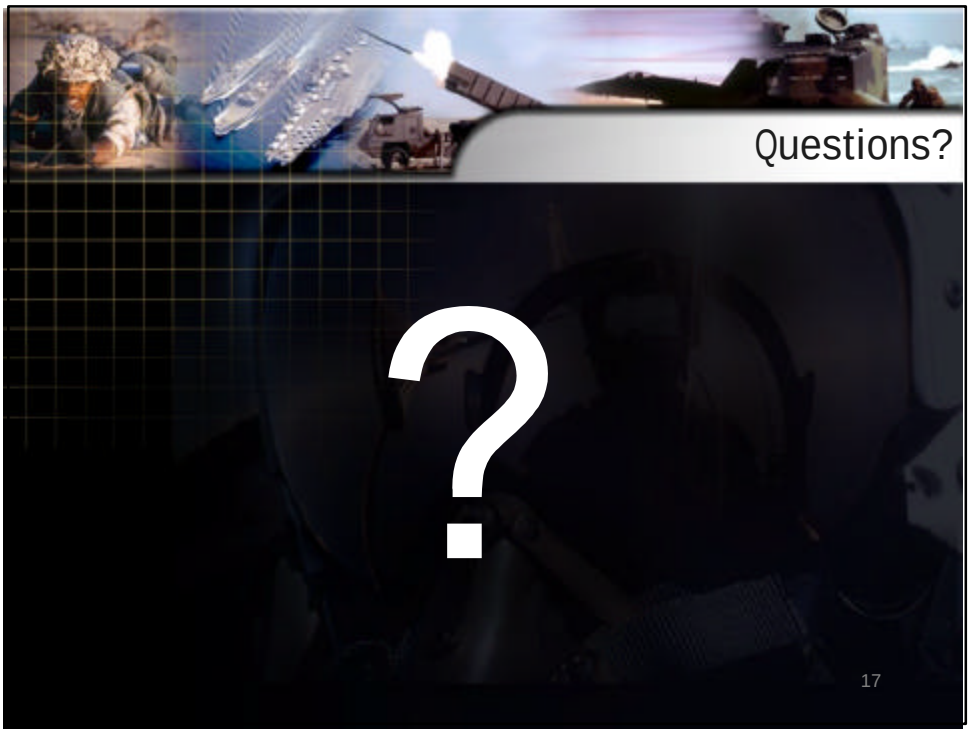
Questions?
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